



Congressman Tim Bishop

FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK

NEWS RELEASE

FEBRUARY 4, 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BISHOP EXPRESSES 'OUTRAGE' AT MISLEADING ADS

HHS Campaign Wastes \$12.6 Million for 'Taxpayer-Financed Propaganda'

Washington, DC: Congressman Tim Bishop today sent a scolding letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, expressing his 'outrage' at a new taxpayer-funded ad campaign. The campaign, entitled "Same Medicare. More Benefits," promotes the recently passed Medicare law. The \$12.6 million campaign will spend \$9 million in TV ads and \$3.1 million for a newspaper, radio and Internet effort.

"After reviewing some of the language in the ads, it is clear that these spots are really campaign ads dressed up as educational spots," Bishop wrote in the letter to Thompson. "I find it unconscionable that HHS would spend taxpayer dollars on ads to tell seniors why they should like this bill."

Bishop urged Thompson to immediately abandon the ad campaign and instead apply the \$12.6 million towards closing the donut hole in coverage, provide additional subsidies for low-income seniors or reducing premiums.

The ads feature four actors who portray Medicare beneficiaries. In one of the ads, an actor says, "So, my Medicare isn't different, it's just more?" The announcer replies, "Right."

Bishop voted against the Medicare law, which passed through the House of Representatives on a partisan vote after a three-hour vote, by far the longest vote in House history. Bishop strongly objected to provisions that forbid the Federal government from using its bargaining powers to seek lower drug costs as well as forcing seniors into HMOs, which will ultimately weaken Medicare.

A copy of the letter follows:

February 4, 2004

The Honorable Tommy Thompson
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

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Dear Secretary Thompson,

I'm writing to express my outrage at your Department's misuse of taxpayer dollars to push a partisan agenda and mislead America's seniors.

On Tuesday, you announced a \$12.6 million advertising campaign to promote the recently passed Medicare law. After reviewing some of the language in the ads, it is clear that these spots are really campaign ads dressed up as educational spots. I find it unconscionable that HHS would spend taxpayer dollars on ads to tell seniors why they should like this bill.

If HHS and the Administration wanted to help seniors, they should apply that \$12 million (admittedly, a modest sum of money relative to the needs this bill leaves unaddressed) towards closing the donut hole in coverage, provide additional subsidies for low-income seniors or reducing premiums.

I am not entirely against using taxpayer dollars for educational ads. For instance, I supported ads letting veterans know what services are available to them, ads which the Administration eliminated so as to minimize the number of veterans they would have to serve. I would even understand, and in fact applaud, if you wanted to run a legitimate education campaign aimed at explaining the ins-and-outs of the new Medicare law. However, these ads are simply taxpayer-financed propaganda in an election year.

Most taxpayers would agree that they would rather see their hard-earned money spent on improving healthcare than on misleading ads. I urge you to pull these ads immediately and use scarce funding in a way that helps seniors, not fluff ads that seek to fool them.

Sincerely,

Tim Bishop
Member of Congress